

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00  
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07  
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 OMB-01  
TRSE-00 /053 W

-----251609Z 040401 /56

O 251557Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3574  
INFO AMCONSUL MONTREAL  
ALL OTHER CANADIAN POSTS (BY POUCH)

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 04228

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, CA  
SUBJECT: LIBERALS BIG WINNERS IN MAY 24 BY-ELECTIONS

1. AS EXPECTED, LIBERALS WON FOUR OF FIVE BY-ELECTIONS IN QUEBEC (THEY WON IN VERDUN, TERREBONNE, LANGELIER, LOUIS-HEBERT AND LOST TEMISCAMINGUE TO SON OF FORMER INCUMBENT, REAL CAOUCETTE). THEIR WIN IN PRINCE EDWARD ISLAND (PEI) RIDING OF MALPEQUE, FORMERLY HELD BY PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVES (PC), IS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING BUT MARGIN OF VICTORY THERE ONLY 120 VOTES OUT OF 9,000 CAST. RESULTS, IN SHORT, DO NOT VARY MUCH FROM PREDICTIONS ON FORM SHEETS AND FEW CLOSE OBSERVERS ARE SURPRISED.

2. ATMOSPHERICS OF ELECTORAL RESULTS QUITE ANOTHER MATTER, HOWEVER, AND RAMIFICATIONS COULD BE GREAT. FIRST, ALTHOUGH OVERALL PC VOTE IN THE SIX ELECTIONS ROSE FROM 15 PERCENT IN 1974 TO 26 PERCENT THIS TIME, FAILURE TO WIN A SEAT IN QUEBEC AND LOSS OF PEI SEAT HELD BY PCS FOR 25 YEARS IS SEVERE BLOW TO TORIES AND PARTICULARLY TO PC LEADER JOE CLARK. AS GLOBE AND  
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MAIL COLUMNIST GEOFFREY STEVENS PUT IT DAY BEFORE BY-ELECTIONS, "FOR SAKE OF PARTY MORALE AND HIS OWN STANDING AS LEADER, MR. CLARK NEEDS TO HOLD MALPEQUE. FOR THE SAKE OF CONSERVATIVES CREDIBILITY AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO LIBERALS, HE NEEDS TO WIN A SEAT OR TWO IN QUEBEC."

3. CLARK'S STANDING AS LEADER WAS ALREADY BEING QUESTIONED BEFORE BY-ELECTIONS (OTTAWA'S 4095). BY-ELECTION RESULTS MAY WELL CAUSE A FORMAL AND DIRECT CHALLENGE TO CLARK'S LEADERSHIP. NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF PC PARTY CANDIDLY ADMITTED THIS TO EMBOFF. CHALLENGE MOST LIKELY TO COME AT PC NATIONAL CONVENTION NEXT NOVEMBER WHERE LEADERSHIP QUESTION WILL BE PUT TO DELEGATES. MORE THAN 50 PERCENT AFFIRMATIVE VOTE WOULD FORCE NEW LEADERSHIP CONVENTION AND EVEN 30 PERCENT VOTE WOULD GIVE CLARK "TROUBLES" ACCORDING TO PC NATIONAL DIRECTOR.

4. REVERSE SIDE OF COIN IS BOOST TO LIBERAL PARTY FORTUNES AND PARTICULARLY PM TRUDEAU. DESPITE CONSIDERABLE INFLUENCE OF LOCAL ISSUES AND PERSONALITIES, TRUDEAU AND OTHER NATIONAL PARTY LEADERS SPENT UNUSUALLY LARGE AMOUNT OF TIME CAMPAIGNING IN THE QUEBEC RIDINGS AND CONTESTS THEREFORE TOOK ON SIGNIFICANT ELEMENT OF POPULARITY CONTEST WITH TRUDEAU LEADERSHIP THE BIG WINNER. THIS INEVITABLY REINFORCES TALK OF A SNAP NATIONAL ELECTION IN THE FALL TO CAPITALIZE ON CURRENT CREST OF NATIONAL LIBERAL POPULARITY. ADDED LIBERAL INCENTIVE WOULD BE TO RECEIVE RENEWED MANDATE BEFORE LIKELY CONTINUATION OF ECONOMIC WOES CAUSES SERIOUS, NEGATIVE VOTER REACTION. FALL ELECTION BEFORE PC NATIONAL CONVENTION WOULD ALSO FORCE PCS TO RUN UNDER LEADERSHIP OF A WEAKENED JOE CLARK. ENDERS

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## Message Attributes

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